

## You Really Got Me by Introvertia

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Child Abuse, Gay Sex, Homophobic Language, Implied/Referenced Suicide, M/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Calvin Powell, Dustin Henderson, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington, Susan Hargrove

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

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**Summary:**

Steve and Billy have been having a secret affair for a few weeks. They confront the realities of having unknown futures, living in different classes, homophobia and are forced to deal with Neil's violent abusive behavior unexpectedly.

You can read my other story Gimmie Shelter before this or read this one on its own.

Pleased be warned I may have made myself cry while writing this, maybe... just a little.

## You Really Got Me

“What’s Steve doing talking with Hargrove?” Dustin was squinting with a hand shading his eyes, Lucas glanced at him, and looked up at the cloud covered sky.

“Real covert there,” He reached over and pushed down Dustin’s hand, “Max says they’re friends now.” Lucas watched standing beside Dustin, both of them straddling their bikes.

“Steve’s friends with that psycho now? Nah, that can’t be real. That’s like super crazy, like fit him with a white jacket and take him away to the looney bin cray-zee, he’s got squirrels in the attic, like nuts.”

“It’s true, they’re friends now.” Max’s voice made them both jump, she was standing beside Lucas and slipped her hand in his, her eyes on Steve and Billy.

“I used to think Steve was a douchebag.” Lucas said thoughtfully.

“Really?!” Max looked at Lucas in shock and amusement.

“It’s true, he was kind of a dick.” Dustin nodded.

“I guess he grew up.” Lucas shrugged.

“He’s like, barely older than us.” Max laughed.

“Some people take longer to mature.” Dustin said sagely.

“So why are they friends now, what happened?” Lucas looked worried, Max gently squeezed his hand.

“I have no idea, but I think it’s a good thing.” She shifted her skateboard under arm and half shrugged.

“You say that now, but wait till the next full moon and Billy goes bonkers.” Dustin sighed.

“That’s not funny.” Max sounded defensive. Lucas shook his head at Dustin.

“Sorry, I just don’t trust him.” Dustin looked a little abashed.

“I know.” Max nodded.

“Whatever they’re talking about they look kind of serious.” Lucas wished he had his binoculars.

“We could go camping?” Steve caught sight of Dustin, Lucas and Max standing in a row near the bike stands, he smiled and waved and turned his attention back to Billy who was leaning on his Camaro and smoking. The parking lot was bustling with students leaving for the day.

“Have we met?” Billy looked at him over his aviator sunglasses.

“What?”

“I don’t want to go camping.”

“Actually, neither do I. Weekend in the city? We could you know, stay in a hotel, see the sights, maybe catch a show, check out a museum?”

“A show, as in a concert? First off I don’t know what band you think we’re going to see, because I don’t trust your taste in music, second of all I can’t afford a hotel, and a museum is a hard maybe.”

“I have a great taste in music, but come on man, no, we could, I got it, it’s no big deal. My folks will help me out, I’ll just tell them it’s an early graduation gift from them to me.”

“Nah, how about one night in the city, we can sleep in my car.”

“Your car, I thought we’d take my car.”

“My backseat’s more comfortable.”

“You got a point there.” Steve agreed.

“Yeah, we’ll leave early, hang out all day in ‘napolis and go to sleep whenever the bars close and drive back in the morning.” Billy was warming to the idea.

“There’s no way we’re getting served in bars,” Steve laughed and shook his head, “wait, how early is early?”

“I’ll pick you up at 5.”

“In the morning, on Saturday?”

“You’re lazy, you know that? You’re soft and lazy.”

“You’re judgemental, and I’m not soft. I just need sleep, I’m a growing boy.”

“You kind of are, soft,” Billy lifted his brows and pursed his lips, “*if* you’re too lazy to get up at 5AM just this one time,” Billy made a tsking sound and shook his head “I do it all the time.”

“Fine, I’ll be ready.”

“Cool.”

“I have the *best* taste in music.” Steve flipped his Ray-bans open and put them on, they both leaned on their cars a yard apart facing one another.

“No, you don’t, you like The Kinks, Oingy Boingy, and Boy George?”  
Billy rolled his eyes.

“The Kinks are classic.”

“Oh and the Tommy Twins, you like all that weird New Wave shit.”

“It’s the *Thompson* Twins, and you’re doing that are purpose aren’t you,” Steve made a face of exasperation, “you’re a little shit sometimes.”

“There’s nothing little about me Harrington.” Billy adjusted the crotch of his jeans suggestively and laughed.

“Shit, knock that off!” Steve glanced back to where the kids had been but they were all in a huddle now that Mike and Will had joined them.

“You worried the kids ‘ill find out?’” Billy pushed his sunglasses up, Max was making her way over to the car.

“No, I just don’t want to teach them about the birds and bees, and the birds and the birds just yet,” Steve puffed out a long exhale, “okay tomorrow morning, 5AM, I get to play one mixed tape, both sides once on the ride there and back.”

“Maybe, maybe, just um, think about what you’re going to do for me, if I do that for you.” Billy waggled his tongue. Steve didn’t have chance to reply because Max had arrived.

“Hey Max” Steve nodded at Max.

“Hi Steve.” She smiled easily, she felt safe when he was around.

“See you guys.” Steve turned and let himself into his BMW.

“See yah.” Max got in the car, she looked over at Billy, but he didn’t say anything, he just got in and started the engine.

Billy dropped Max off at home and drove to the Wilkins’ Family Gas Station and Mechanic. He donned his navy blue coveralls and started work. He didn’t mind it, not really. It was better than being at the house, and he was learning. Elmore Wilkins, the owner, was a good mechanic and seemed excited to have an apprentice. Billy played it cool, but he was into it.

Steve got to Nancy's house, he pulled the car over and popped out. She was walking towards the car, her backpack on her shoulder.

"Hey, there you are."

"Sorry, I know I'm late."

"Hey it's cool, just you know ruining big my Friday night plans by being late."

"Only 10 minutes late." Steve held up his Swatch watch and shrugged.

"Im teasing you, come on let's go. God you really love that watch."

Steve smiled, he looked at the watch, "You have to admit, it's pretty cool." Nancy laughed and got in. They drove to the Byer's house to pick up Jonathan. Their wild Friday night was at the diner, with cheap coffee, french fries and lots applications to different universities, Nancy had gotten to both of them and she wasn't taking no for an answer, they were all going to apply.

It was weird, but it was good, things were different now, less strained than they had been a couple months ago. Steve noticed that the phrase "Shared trauma" was something both Jon and Nance tossed around quite a bit, he didn't know why they were so stuck on it. Yeah, we've been through some shit together, you weirdos, he wanted to say, but he just nodded and put a fry in his mouth, he was glad they were happy, he was getting his happy too, in the form of Billy. Billy 'fucking' Hargrove, he shook his head deep in thought.

"Why are you shaking your head?" Nancy was looking at him.

"What? Uh, because this essay is a nightmare, that's why!" He cleared his throat and took a sip of coffee, he was blushing, God damn it

Hargrove, he thought wistfully. They filled out forms and drafted essays till closing. Steve dropped them both off at the Wheeler house. Nancy went in the front door, and Jon, well he had to play Romeo and scrabble up the outside of the house. Steve raised his eyebrows, watching Jon clumsily attempting to maneuver into Nancy's window, he decided it was best to leave before he witnessed the poor guy break his neck and drove home.

As soon as Steve got home he went upstairs and grabbed a bag and started picking out what he would wear tomorrow, he really wanted a hotel, it would be kind of cool just the two of them, but he didn't want to make Billy uncomfortable, maybe they could go on a long weekend trip during summer, maybe up to Chicago. The phone rang making Steve jump, he checked the time, it was only 8:15, not late, but very late for phone calls by his parent's standards. He went in the hallway and grabbed the phone.

"Hello?" Steve's parents were in their room with the TV going, he hoped they hadn't heard the phone ringing.

"Hey." Billy's voice was flat and tired, the line crackled.

"Honey, who is that, isn't it a little late for phone calls?" Steve's mom poked her head out of the master bedroom.

"It's Nancy."

"Oh, tell her I say hello, she's such a nice girl. Weren't you just at the diner with her?"

"Yeah, maybe she left something in my car."

"Huh." His mom nodded and went back in her room.

"Hey, sorry." Steve said into the phone, he pulled at the coiled phone cord restlessly.

"Do you wish I was Nancy?"

"That's ridiculous. It's just easier. What's going on, you okay?"

“I’m fine. Gotta cancel tomorrow.”

“How come?”

“Neil and Susan need to go to Shelbyville to see Susan’s Cousin, apparently she’s dying or something. I’m supposed to be here all day tomorrow to wait for the new oven and install it.”

“Don’t you need a gasman to install the oven? Just don’t blow yourself up,” Steve kidded, but got no response, “...we can go next Saturday.”

“Can’t next Saturday, I’m getting more hours with Wilkins, I need the cash. I gotta get to the house Neil has instructions for me or some shit, later.” Billy hung up abruptly. Steve looked at phone, he knew it wasn’t about him, but it still hurt getting the ripples of Billy’s anger. They’d promised each other no bullshit, and that meant talking through everything, which was good, but really difficult sometimes, he wondered how he’d bring this up. Steve went back in his room and unpacked his bag and his mind.

Billy shrugged out of his coveralls and tossed them in the trunk. He’d been excited, they had almost gotten out of Hawkins for one day. Billy slammed his car door, “Shithole Hawkins!” He punched the steering wheel. Hawkins, he mused, where the only thing worth seeing was Harrington and he *was* going to take him with him. Billy drove home, his stomach was tight and his mouth was feeling like sawdust. It wasn’t a new sensation, it was the way he always felt when going home to talk to dear old dad.

Saturday morning and Billy sat silently at the breakfast table. Susan was red eyed and pale as she served breakfast. Neil looked at his plate and looked at Billy, Billy knew his cue.

“Thank you.” Billy said to the plate, although he was addressing Susan, he didn’t want to look at either of them.

“You’re welcome.” Susan’s response was almost as mechanical as Billy’s thanks.

Max was eating her scrambled eggs looking forlorn, she was being forced to go, in case it was the last time she got to see her second cousin Peggy.

“I need more coffee.” Neil said impatiently. Susan got up and fetched the carafe, she filled Neil’s cup and topped off Billy’s before sitting down again.

“Thank you.” Billy mumbled around his toast. He couldn’t really taste anything. He just wanted them to leave already.

“This is nice, we haven’t all had breakfast together in weeks.” Susan attempted some cheer, but it rang false even in her own ears. Neil nodded his eyes on his son, Billy knew something was coming.

“I got an A on my history exam yesterday.” Max blurted.

“Did you sweetheart? I’m so proud of you.” Susan beamed, her eyes a little misty. Neil nodded at Max. “Good job Maxine, a little self discipline will take you far.” Neil snorted in Billy’s direction as he rose from the table, “She’s got the right stuff, at least one of these kids does.” Max looked alarmed and glanced at Billy. He surprised her and winked at her. She felt her shoulders drop a little. Since the night at the Byers’ they started keeping their fights to themselves, Neil had become their mutual enemy. Billy was still a pressure-cooker about to blow 90% of the time, but he had stopped taking it out on Max, and more importantly to her, he left her friends alone.

“We’re leaving in 10.” Neil announced, he slurped down the last of his coffee and went into the living room, Billy heard the radio go on, sports newscasters debated the skill of boxer Marvin Hagler a mile a minute, Neil turned off the radio with a grunt of disgust.

“Sports are a joke these days and all these so called athletes...” Neil grabbed his keys off the hall table, “Billy you remember your

responsibilities, I don't want to be anymore disappointed than necessary.”

“Yes, sir.” Billy said softly but clearly. Neil seemed satisfied and walked out the front door. Susan absentmindedly pet Max's head as she rose from the table. Max considered Billy, he wasn't looking at her, he was staring at the coffee cup.

“Thanks for taking care of the oven, it'll be nice to get one we can actually bake in.” Susan said very gently to Billy. Billy attempted a smile and nodded not looking up from his coffee.

“Come on Max, go get your jacket, no skateboard honey.” Max stood up from the table with her plate and walked to the sink with it. Billy got up and started clearing the rest of the table, he checked the time willing them to leave already.

As soon as they were gone Billy turned on the stereo, opened the kitchen windows and lit up a smoke. It was cold but the cold felt good. He finished the easy stuff first, taking out the trash, washing the dishes and getting the kitchen in order. Next was the oven. He slid some cardboard underneath it, he kept having to tilt the corners an angle the weight, he was sweating in no time, it weighed a ton, he wouldn't have bothered with the cardboard but he was under strict instruction to make sure the linoleum didn't get scuffed. The doorbell rang interrupting his string of expletives and inspiring a new one. He tossed his cigarette in the sink and wondered if the new oven had already arrived. The wall clock read 9:47 AM, he scowled and went to get the door.

Billy opened the door, “What?” he demanded and there was Steve.

Billy leaned out of the door and looked up and down the street, they'd been gone for nearly half an hour but he felt his heart clench with anxiety, Neil would be furious.

"Hey?" Steve looked up and down the street, swiveling his head. Billy stepped back and gestured for Steve to come in.

"You're not happy to see me." Steve deduced looking discouraged.

"No. I wasn't expecting you." Billy had a small frown and his brow was creased.

"Surprise." Steve held up his hands and waved his fingers like a failed magician. Billy walked into the kitchen abandoning Steve at the threshold to get himself a beer, his heart was racing, he never had anyone over, it was against Neil's rules. Steve followed him into the kitchen, he'd at least expected a smile, maybe even a kiss, this wasn't going well at all.

"I just thought since they were going out of town it'd be cool if I came over and helped." He pointed at the oven.

"I got it." Billy answered around the beer can and took another sip.

"I know you've got it, but I could make it easier." Steve shoved his hands in his pockets, Billy had his back against the kitchen sink as he drained the can and crumpled it and tossed it in the trash. They both examined the floor and the walls, Steve shook his head and shrugged.

"Okay." He moved to leave but Billy brushed his elbow with the tips of his fingers.

"It'd be faster." Billy nodded at the oven, "It's pretty solid, I think it was built in the 40s."

"I didn't know they made gas stoves in the 40s." Steve replied with a small smile.

"You might get dirty." Billy looked at Steve from head to toe.

"I don't care about that." Steve looked perplexed.

“Cool. Just don’t smash your toes.” Billy elbowed him gently.

“You’re doing that thing again.”

“Dude, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Billy walked over to the oven and started bossing Steve around with a small smirk occasionally blooming in the corner of his mouth. Billy turned off the gas and checked that his smoke was completely out before detaching the hose. They made slow progress but between the two of them they moved the small tank of an oven out of the kitchen without leaving a mark and dragged it to the curb for the scrap collector. Steve sat himself on top the oven, “Victory, and you’re welcome.” Billy squinted at him and lit a smoke. “That thing can’t be very comfortable.”

“Nope it’s not.” Steve admitted, “But you know, I’m showing it who’s boss.”

“Harrington. You’re a dork.”

“Then why do you laugh at my jokes?”

“Who’s laughing?” Billy’s eyes twinkled with an amused squint and casually ran a hand up Steve’s thigh.

“Thanks, for showing up.” Billy purred, Steve sat up a little straighter, it was the first intimate touch he’d received all morning.

“My pleasure.”

“It will be.” Billy winked.

They could hear it before they saw the Sears delivery truck rolling up the street, Billy took a step back and watched the truck start to back up the driveway. The two delivery guys got out of the truck and nodded at Billy.

“We got the Kenmore here.” The driver announced with a thick Chicago accent, while his partner slouched around to the back of the truck.

“Yeah, follow me.” Billy tilted his head towards the side entrance of

the house.

Steve stood back while they delivery men swiftly unloaded the oven, unwrapped it and got two signatures from Billy. It seemed to Steve that once they gleaned they weren't getting a tip they did as little as possible and as fast as they could, which suited Steve fine. Billy attached the hose, checked the pilot and lit the burners, he even ran the over for a bit testing everything out. Steve swept the floor while Billy inspected the oven.

"Is that everything?" Steve put the broom back where he found it and turned to face Billy.

"No. There's something else I need help with." Billy walked over wiping his hands on his jeans.

"Oh, sure. What do you got?"

"It's a two man job, for sure." Billy stepped close, nearly nose to nose with Steve and slowly lowered his gaze to his own crotch. Steve nodded following his gaze and lifted his eyes back to Billy's.

"You are so cheesy." Steve stood with his arms akimbo.

"You eat it up, otherwise how would *this* be good." Billy gestured between them and bit his bottom lip. Steve shook his head and turned away as if to leave and immediately turned back and kissed Billy, his hands lighted on his chest and slid up to his shoulders and down his arms, tracing his frame with gentle strokes, the kiss growing deeper, Billy parted his lips their tongues meeting. Steve's hands rested on Billy's hips and pulled him close.

"Mm... where's your bedroom?" Steve inquired his voice hushed. Billy reached up and ran his thumb over Steve's bottom lip, his eyes lowered as he watched Steve's lips twist into a smile, right before biting Billy's thumb. Billy hissed lightly but didn't pull his thumb

away. Billy's blue eyes were so bright that Steve could see the fullness of his pupils, he released his thumb and kissed him again, their hips meeting and rolling.

"Let me show you." Billy mumbled between kisses and peeled himself away, it was hard to remember where his room was after that. Steve followed silently watching Billy walk ahead of him, he took in the whole view with a little wonder and lot of hunger. Billy led the way, and pushed open his bedroom door and did a quick survey, it wasn't as nice as Harrington's, but it was neat enough, he turned to find Steve looking at the poster.

"Is that a friend of yours?" Steve gestured to the red string bikini clad model adorning Billy's closet door.

"Oh yeah, we go way back." Billy smiled.

"Is that your type, like is that what you're into?" Steve was getting distracted, Billy reached over and slapped the closet door shut.

"Why are you looking at her when I'm right here?" Billy tugged off his t-shirt, his fingers reaching up to touch his chain, the Virgin Mary, as always, was rested above his heart, it was something Steve had seen him do many times before in the locker room and a couple times when they'd been alone elsewhere. Steve pulled off his sweater and poloshirt and walked into Billy's chest slowly till Billy felt his bed at the back of his knees. Billy sat down and Steve straddled him, he dug his fingers in Billy's hair and kissed him, Billy laid back pulling Steve with him. Steve sat up and shifted his hips without reservation.

"Easy." Billy twisted beneath him, his face flushing. Steve reached back and plucked off his sneakers, he lifted himself on his knees and unbuckled his belt, Billy stroked Steve's hips and thighs watching him.

"You're *my* type, Harrington." Billy squeezed Steve's hips. Steve leaned forward, the heels of his palms rested on Billy's hipbones, Billy met him halfway and they kissed again, Steve gently bit Billy's bottom lip and nipped his chin.

"Good." Steve ducked out of the kiss and rolled off him, Billy sat up

and watched as Steve finished stripping. Steve reached over and grabbed the heel of Billy's boot and tugged one off and then the other. Billy skinned his jeans off and knelt on the bed pulling Steve into his arms. Steve crawled forward and laid on top of Billy pressing him into the mattress. Billy chuckled and tilted his head curiously asking, "You should be this aggressive on the court." as he reached over the side of the bed and between the mattresses, he struggled a little as Steve deliberately clung to him making it difficult. Billy laughed again, but managed to get what he was reaching for, he pulled a small plastic bag that had a secreted tube of lube.

"I will be, when it counts." Steve snatched the bag out his hand and fished out the lube. He squeezed some into his right palm and grasped himself and began stroking. Billy started to sit up but Steve placed his free hand on his chest and laid him back, Billy rested his head back and rolled slowly up again and again, his eyes closing, Steve scooted back and knelt between Billy's thighs and folded Billy's knees up and out, Billy opened his eyes and arched his back, his ankles crossing encouragingly against Steve's waist. Steve shifted and reached between them, his fingers slick pressing into Billy slow and steady. Billy squeezed his heels into Steve's lower back and nodded. Steve withdrew his fingers and guided his cock and began pressing eagerly, eliciting a low murmur from Billy, Billy arched and grabbed hold of Steve's shoulders pulling him closer, Steve gripped Billy's cock and stroked it steadily while he rocked deeper inside of him. Billy clutched at Steve, he buried his face in Steve's neck and kissed him up one side and nipped at his ear, "Yes." Steve bit Billy's shoulder and ground harder, Billy moaned loudly, making Steve jump, Billy had always been the louder of the two but this was *new*. They moved in time, the room was brightly lit by the early afternoon light, Steve's face was haloed darkly by his hair, Billy's eyes shined brightly damp and focused. It wasn't long before they rutted faster, Billy Grunted loudly and came up Steve's belly, Steve bit down again on Billy's shoulder and squeezed his eyes shut, he held on for a few more hard thrusts and came. Steve rolled Billy on top. They were both a little out of breath, flushed and content, for the moment. Billy shifted and squirmed free, he laid on his side facing Steve. Steve ran his hands over his own face and peeked at him through his fingers, he couldn't help but blush, he turned on his back and smiled at the ceiling, "I like this."

“This is good.” Billy replied. It wasn’t the same as saying I love you and I love you too, Steve reasoned, but it felt pretty close.

Billy sniffed, and then frowned, and laughed.

“I stink Harrington, I haven’t showered since after gym yesterday.”

“Not bad, not to me.” Steve said earnestly and pulled him closer. Billy twitched a smile at Steve and rested his head back. They never had time like this, it was always quick and a little bit risky. He stole a look at Steve, his eyes rested shut, he looked so calm, it was contagious. Billy pressed his lips close to Steve and whispered in a shy singsong, *“Well I’m not the world’s most masculine man, but I know what I am and I’m glad I’m a man, so is Lola, Lo Lo Lo Lo Lola ...”*

Steve’s eyes flew open, he turned and kissed Billy, and pulled away, “You fucker, you like The Kinks!”

“Yeah, they got a couple good songs, I guess.” Billy laughed in earnest. Steve was genuinely pleased, especially hearing that throaty laugh. They lingered tangled and exploring one another for some time, till hunger for food drove them out of bed.

After some debating (and the flip of a coin) they got in Steve’s car and headed to the diner. Steve insisted on buying them lunch, Billy was so hungry he didn’t care, they stuffed themselves and argued about music, cars, and tactics on the court. They hadn’t done this before, Billy would sometimes get quiet during the meal, and look at Steve with an unreadable expression. Steve noticed it more than once, the third time Steve extended his leg under the table and toed Billy’s boot.

“You good?”

“Never better.” Billy replied and sipped at his Coke, he watched a few of the other kids from school walk by the diner, most likely heading to the Hawk Theater, Steve was more than someone to fool around

with, he was a real friend, Billy's first one since California.

"What the hell is there to do around here?" Billy waved his palm at the air around himself.

"Oh, I'm sorry, am I boring you?"

"No." Billy stuck out his tongue and licked the salt off a french fry lasciviously at Steve,

"I mean there's not a lot to do, everything closes early or is far and it's sooo boring, not you, Hawkins. Shithole-Hawkins."

"We can go on a roadtrip in the summer." Steve consoled.

"Or we could live in L.A. and have everything close by." Billy picked up a pickle spear and sucked on it making Steve look away, color rising in his cheeks.

"Yeah?" Steve shifted in his seat and stirred the dregs of his shake, he knew Billy didn't mean *we* could live in L.A. as in them together, lovers out in Los Angeles with sunshine and the freedom of anonymity; but it sounded amazing.

"Yeah, the beaches, the mountains, the clubs, all of it." Billy sighed sinking down into the booth.

"Well school's almost over," Steve looked up at Billy hopefully, wanting to hear more about what they could do together.

"Yep and you and your bookworm friends are off to college and I'll be here making minimum wage as a grease monkey in training." Billy pushed his plate away.

"It doesn't have to be like that, besides I don't even know if I'll get in. You are applying to colleges aren't you?" Steve probed, they'd never talked about life after high school, not what it would mean for *them*.

"Why, who's going to pay for it?"

"Sports scholarship?" Steve suggested.

“You don’t have perspective man, I’m a big fish in a small pond, the kids I used to ball with, *they* had game.” Billy looked at Steve, he could tell by his expression that that last statement had stung.

“Hey, let’s get out of here.” Billy reached over and touched Steve’s hand with a quick brushing of his fingertips. Steve glanced at the check and dropped a few wadded bills. They walked out together and leaned on Steve’s car and shared a smoke. Steve started to wonder what would happen to the *them* and the *we* after school, especially if he was accepted at one of the universities he’d applied to. Maybe it was too much to ask.

“You’re cute when you’re thinking, you look like it hurts.” Billy snarked.

“You’re an asshole.” Steve said without feeling.

“Yeah, you’re still cute.” Billy glanced around, a middle aged couple was walking out of the diner and looked at Billy like he was wielding knives.

“Cute?” Steve glanced over and nodded at them, this seemed to distract them enough to move on.

“Should I say it again louder?” Billy raised his voice.

“Eh, no.” Steve exhaled a soft huff of laughter. Billy was tempted to ask what Steve was thinking, but didn’t. He went around to the passenger side and waited for Steve to let him in. They sat in the car for a bit in silence, neither of them speaking.

“I still like this, with you.” Billy said cautiously.

“I do too.” Steve started the car and pulled out of the parking lot. Steve drove aimlessly, conversation was fleeting and a little bit stilted. Billy wanted to ask Steve to spend the night, but wasn’t sure when Neil would be back. He pulled Steve’s wrist over checking the time.

“I should get home.”

“So soon? No problem.” Steve was surprised, but didn’t want to pry,

he didn't know if Billy was just tired of hanging out with him or if he had plans. He tried to remind himself of the 'no bullshit rule', and wondered if he was bullshitting by not asking?

"Why don't you move out."

"To where my car?" I've thought about it."

"You could stay with me."

"You mean, I could stay at your parents house."

"Your father,"

"Is an asshole. I know, I live with him. Look, Wilkins wants to go into semi-retirement, if I get 40 hours a week, and learn a little bit more about fixing cars, I can move out by the end of summer, just rent a room and save up till I get out of Hawkins."

"You got it all figured out." Steve meant to rally Billy, but it came out sounding sarcastic.

"Pull over."

"What, here? We're six blocks away from your place."

" I said pull over." Billy was speaking calmly but he was coiling. He kept his eyes forward his fists in his lap. Steve pulled to the side of the road.

"Fine." Steve rubbed his palms over his face. Billy got out and slammed the car door, practically shaking it to pieces. Steve opened and closed his jaw to release the pressure in his ears. He watched Billy walk up the street, his stride quick and determined. Billy punched a mail box off its post and kept walking.

Steve sat in his car, he cut the engine and stared out the window, not

really seeing anything. He couldn't even make things work for a day with Billy, how the hell would he do a weekend? He chewed at his thumbnail. If anyone told him in November that they were dating Billy Hargrove he would have told them suicide might be a better option. His mind locked on dating, were they dating?

"I said NO bullshit!" Steve yelled. Luckily the windows were up and the lady walking her dog didn't seem to have heard him, or was deliberately ignoring him and walking by just a teensy bit faster. He started chewing on the other thumbnail sitting back and then started the ignition and drove towards home. As he was cutting across town he saw Jon and Nancy outside of the theater, he flashed on the idea of asking them what to do, what the hell to do about Billy, but they couldn't know. Maybe they wouldn't care about them both being dudes, he was pretty sure Jon wouldn't care, Jon was weird, a good weird... Nancy might think he'd been brainwashed or just a pervert or maybe not, but it was a serious gamble. The realization that he could only talk to Billy *about* Billy dawned on him when he looked down at the footwell on the passenger-side saw the Virgin Mary, the pendant that Billy was always wearing was shining up at him with the answer, he'd go talk to him, not tomorrow because Billy would be wondering where the hell it went, but now. Steve looped the block and headed back towards the Hargrove home attempting different openers, "Hey, look who I found in the car? About, us? How about us? If this is good, and we like this, why not something serious?" He reached down and grabbed the chain off the floor, closed the clasp and threw it on over his head for safe keeping.

Steve pulled over across the street from the Hargrove residence and saw that Neil's car was in the driveway. He didn't dare go to the door, he didn't want to stress Billy out, or worse give Neil an excuse to go after Billy. That was when the side door of the house banged open and Billy went tumbling backwards off the porch. His nose was bleeding heavily. Billy sprang up, his hands fists at his sides he staggered back a few steps, resting his hand on the parked Camaro

for balance, Steve saw Neil come down the porch his eyes locked on Billy. Steve had no idea what Neil was shouting, Neil sucker punched Billy in the gut, it was a lightning quick of a strike, Billy folded in half, but didn't go down. Steve was getting out of his car and running up the driveway before he'd even finished deciding to do it.

"Stop! Stop!" Steve had never yelled at an adult, he dashed between them his hands raised. Neil face was bright red, the veins in his neck were bulging.

"Is this one of your *faggot* friends?" Neil bellowed "You a fucking fairy too? Another one, huh? You here for your girlfriend?", Steve held his ground, his palms up.

"Mr Hargrove!" Steve tried to sound authoritative, he wished he had a bat. A woman across the street opened her living room curtains hearing the ruckus and grabbed the phone calling the police.

"Go home." Billy's voice was raw, he was forcing himself to stand straight. Steve reached over and put a hand on Billy's shoulder to steady him. Billy watched in horror as Neil's fist landed on Steve's temple, Steve reeled back his head bounced off the roof of the Camaro, and he crumpled to the ground, his eyes were half cast and his limbs spasmed and then he was still.

"No, no, NO!" Billy leaped on his father, knocking him back on the concrete steps, Billy landed a blow his fists cracking into Neil's nose, Neil shoved Billy off, blinded by the blow and struggling to get away.

"You killed him, you fucking killed HIM, YOU KILLED HIM!!!" Billy was screaming and throwing punches, battering Neil down the driveway. The neighbor just north of them, a retired farmer came out and saw Billy kicking the daylights out of Neil, he ran over and threw his arms around Billy's and drew him back, Billy dropped down and twisted out of his grip like a snake and tackled Neil again. Mr Graham, their neighbor, kept trying to get Billy to stop, but it was impossible, Billy was so focused on Neil that he spared the old man by chance. Mr Graham later confided in Hopper that he had known that it was that kind of family, but he had no idea it would come to this. Neil was bloodied and folded on the ground, when it was clear his old man wasn't about to get up anytime soon Billy relented and ran up the driveway falling on his knees and grabbing up Steve.

“Help! HELP!” Billy howled and clutched Steve to him.

Steve’s eyes opened in alarm, he was breathing hard, dazed all he knew was that Billy was screaming for help. He almost sprang out of Billy’s arms. Hopper came charging up the driveway. Neither of them had heard the sirens or noticed the flashing lights.

“Steve?” Steve looked like a ghost, all the color had drained from his face and there was a goose egg blooming on his temple.

“I’m okay.” Steve reached up grabbing onto Billy’s forearm not wanting him to let go.

“No kid you’re not.” Hopper had his flashlight out, it was still daylight but he shined it into Steve’s eyes looking at his pupils, he looked at Billy, bloodied and red eyed, vibrating with adrenaline.

“Did you do this?”

“No.” Steve answered.

Neil was half sat up on the ground, Mr Graham holding a cloth to his face.

“Howard, can you get Neil to the hospital, I’m going to have Officer Powell meet you there, I’ve got these too.

“You sure about that?” Howard Graham was eyeing Billy with uncertainty.

“Yeah, get him out of here, I’ve got the kids.” Hopper sounded very tired, “Come on Billy. we’ve got to go to the hospital, right now.” Billy nodded and scooped up Steve.

“I can walk.” Steve said. Billy kept walking and held him a little closer. Hopper watched Billy hold onto Steve like his life depended on it the whole time in the car, both boys silent. Billy half walked and carried Steve through the ER doors with Hopper leading the way. Hopper met Doc Campbell who had been told to expect them.

“Can you clean them up, make sure Harrington doesn’t have a concussion or worse, and get Billy Hargrove’s fingers checked, he might have broken them, oh and Doc, keep them together, long story.

It's just easier."

"Sure thing Chief, looks like a quit a melee." Dr. Campbell was unphased and got down to business. The boys were ushered to a room by a nurse and their wounds were already being seen to when Powell came in and caught up with Hopper who was observing Mr Graham assisting Neil into a wheelchair.

"Hey Powell, cuff him to that thing." Powell looked up and nodded, he looked a little thrown off but didn't argue.

Billy and Steve sat in a small waiting room, Steve had been given pills for pain, and had two ice-packs for his head and told not to sleep for the next 8 hours. His head ached at both temples. One minute he was trying to help Billy and the next Billy was cradling him in his arms and screaming for help. That had been the most terrifying part, he'd never heard Billy sound afraid. Steve sat on the examination bed with his back to the wall watching a nurse splint Billy's ring and index fingers on his left hand, she'd already splinted his right pinkie and put a butterfly bandage on the bridge of his nose and given Billy two stitches on his lip. His ribs had been poked and pressed by the Doctor and declared in passable condition. When the nurse was done she gently asked if she should call their folks. Billy said 'My father's already here', and Steve said, 'I'm an adult there's no need'. The nurse didn't fuss, just left them alone in the room, telling them to wait for Hopper.

"You look like shit, Harrington," Billy twitched a smile and then reached up to his stitches, "mmrrgh."

"You look worse." Steve tilted his head and then held still. Moving his head did not feel good at all.

"D'you think Hopper will lock me up?" Billy sounded exhausted.

"For defending yourself and me from Neil?" Steve started to shake his

head no but stopped.

“No, I don’t. Hopper’s a smart guy. It wasn’t your fault.”

“How do you know, shit, I thought you were dead.” Billy turned his face away, his shoulders jumped and he put his palms over his face. Steve slid off the examination bed and sat down in a plastic chair next to Billy, he put an arm around him slowly and leaned on his shoulder.

“I’m okay.”

“Yeah.” Billy took a deep breath and lifted his head running his palms down his face, he sniffed and nodded. Billy looked at the necklace around’ Steve’s neck.

“You dropped it in the car, I was going to bring it back, and that’s when I saw you in the driveway, with Neil. Where are Max and Susan?”

“They stayed in Shelbyville with Susan’s cousin.”

“I really thought he killed you.” Billy was looking at Steve, studying him with a bewildered expresion.

“I have a minor concussion, you really do look worse than I do, you might even get a cool scar on your lip.” Billy’s tongue darted touching the stitches, he chuckled exhausted.

“As long as you like it.”

Billy’s hands were rested in his lap, Steve reached over and gently took one, careful not to squeeze his injured knuckles and fingers.

“As soon as you get into a college tell me which one and I’ll go find work there.” Billy stated, his eyes on the floor.

“It’s a deal. I’ll get a place off campus *if* I get into a school, one we can share.” The two of them leaned shoulder to shoulder. Steve knew the night was just getting started and that Hopper would be on their side, which gave him a little bit of comfort and a lot of hope.

“When this is over, you’re coming home with me, King Steve has decreed it.” Steve declared gently.

“You were trying to save me weren’t you.” Billy laughed softly.

“Maybe I did.” Steve nudged Billy’s shoulder.

“Not from *that* fight, but maybe you did.” Billy conceded. Steve reached up to the chain around his neck, Billy stayed his hand.

“You wear it, for now.”

“Okay.” Steve stole a gentle kiss.